



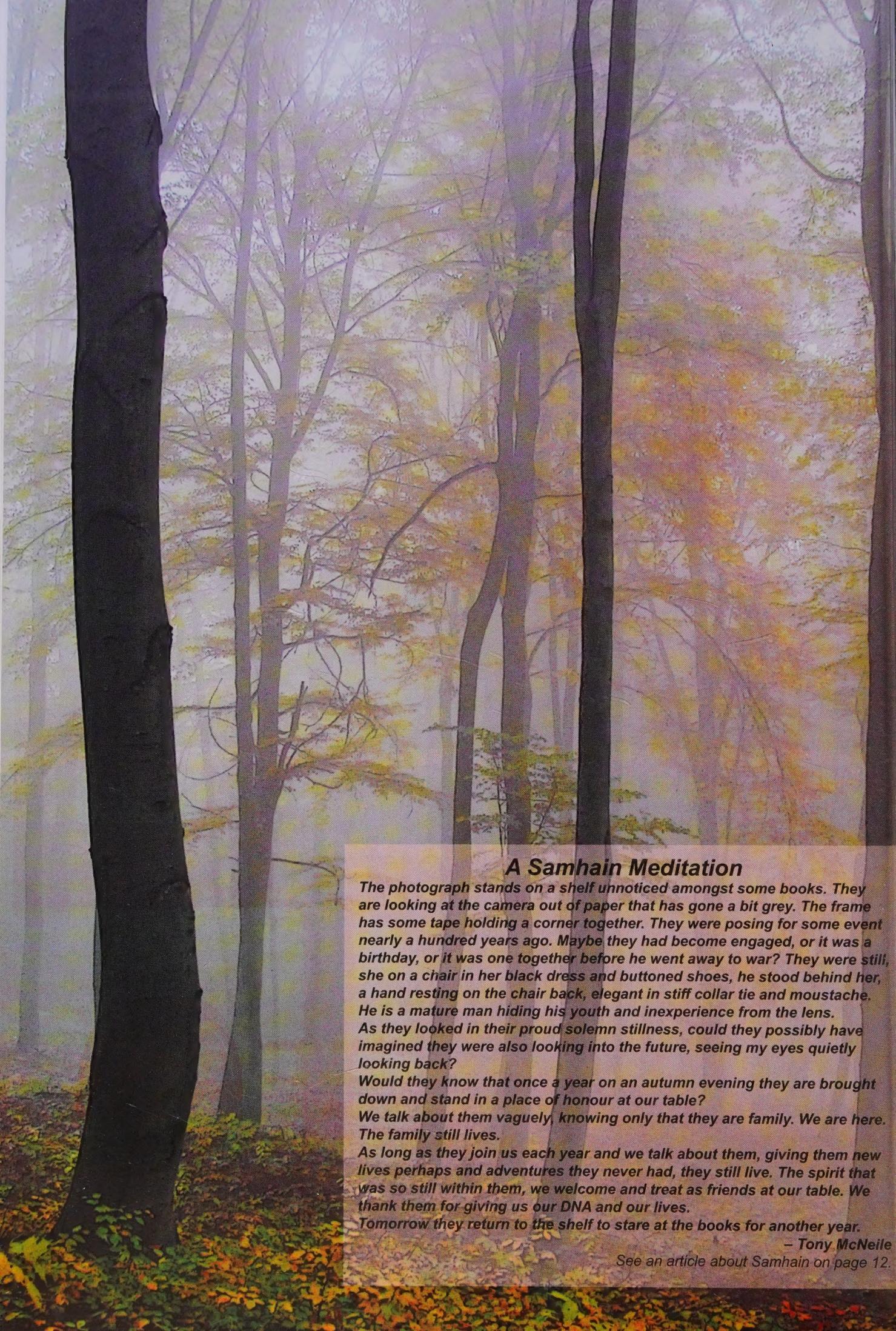
# Robert Hibbert's house

that slavery built

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The voice of British and Irish Unitarians and Free Christians Issue 7901 22 October 2016



### A Samhain Meditation

The photograph stands on a shelf unnoticed amongst some books. They are looking at the camera out of paper that has gone a bit grey. The frame has some tape holding a corner together. They were posing for some event nearly a hundred years ago. Maybe they had become engaged, or it was a birthday, or it was one together before he went away to war? They were still, she on a chair in her black dress and buttoned shoes, he stood behind her, a hand resting on the chair back, elegant in stiff collar tie and moustache. He is a mature man hiding his youth and inexperience from the lens.

As they looked in their proud solemn stillness, could they possibly have imagined they were also looking into the future, seeing my eyes quietly looking back?

Would they know that once a year on an autumn evening they are brought down and stand in a place of honour at our table?

We talk about them vaguely, knowing only that they are family. We are here. The family still lives.

As long as they join us each year and we talk about them, giving them new lives perhaps and adventures they never had, they still live. The spirit that was so still within them, we welcome and treat as friends at our table. We thank them for giving us our DNA and our lives.

Tomorrow they return to the shelf to stare at the books for another year.

— Tony McNeile

See an article about Samhain on page 12.

# Visiting a house of ‘downpression’

*Woe to the downpressors:  
They'll eat the bread of sorrow!*

*Woe to the downpressors:*

*They'll eat the bread of sad tomorrow!*

- Bob Marley & The Wailers,  
*'Guiltiness'* (1977)

By Cliff Reed

The name ‘Hibbert House’ may, for some mean the 12 ‘rest & recreation’ establishments which that revered Unitarian body, the Hibbert Trust, opened for British service personnel in the Middle East in the 1940s. For others, ‘Hibbert House’ may mean the hostel (or the unofficial commune that lived there!) opened by the Trust in Camden Town in 1968 – and from which I was summarily evicted, with five others (we were the ‘Hibbert House Six’) one cold night in January 1972! Long story!

But the first place to bear the name ‘Hibbert House’ was very different from any of these. I went there with a group of family and friends one hot day in August.

A large and imposing town-house, 79 Duke Street is at the very heart of downtown Kingston, Jamaica. Today it is more usually called ‘Headquarters House’, because, in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century it was the effective seat of British colonial rule and its military command. It had also become the meeting-place of the island’s legislature. Its first chamber survives there, more or less intact. Today it houses the offices of the Jamaica National Heritage Trust, and it was the Trust’s Georgia Rookwood who gave us a most informative guided tour. But long before all this it was the Jamaican home of the Hibbert family – sugar-planters, slave-dealers, and slave-owners to the last.

## ‘Elegant’ house held slaves in the cellars

Thomas Hibbert built the house in 1755, during the darkest days of slavery. He is said to have had a bet with three other ‘merchants’ as to who could build the most elegant town-house, but only Hibbert’s survives. It is indeed elegant, and large. Across the yard at the back is the range of buildings where the slaves worked. In 1754, his brother, John, had joined Thomas in his ‘slave factorage’ in Jamaica. Slaves awaiting sale were kept in the cellars of what was, in those days, named ‘Hibbert House’.

Today those cellars house a large collection of artefacts collected from the now derelict or demolished slave-owners’ ‘great houses’ across Jamaica. One such house that has survived intact (and not been sacrificed to tourism) is well worth a visit, namely the Greenwood Great House, near



*The doorway to Hibbert House, built by Robert Hibbert, slave-owner and founder of the Hibbert Trust. He bet three other slave merchants that he would build the most elegant town house. Photo by Cliff Reed*

Montego Bay – built by the Barrett family of Browning fame.

In 1760, John Hibbert married Janet Gordon – from an established white (of course!) family in Jamaica. It should be noted that although white men in 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century Jamaica *customarily* had black women as concubines (for want of a better word), they never, ever, married them.

## Hibbert was educated at Cambridge

Many children resulted from such liaisons, though. In 1769, John and Janet had a son, whom they named Robert. We can say with a high degree of certainty that Robert Hibbert was born in ‘Hibbert House’ in Kingston. (He is often referred to as ‘Robert Hibbert Jnr’ because there was an elder Robert somewhere else in this large extended family.)

Like all the sons of wealthy families in the Jamaica of those

(Continued on page 6)

# The INQUIRER

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*From the Object passed at the General Assembly of the Unitarian and Free Christian Churches 2001*

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## Inquiring Words

It is not a liberty of circumstance, conceded to us alone, that we wish; it is the adoption absolute of the principle that no man, born red, black or white, can be the property of his fellow man.

— Toussaint L'Ouverture

## Haiti is hit again

With grim predictability, cholera is now stalking the people of Haiti. Clean water is a rare and precious resource in that ravaged nation. The very few fresh water wells are privately held and their owners charge whatever the market will bear. Mothers add seawater to stretch out what they give their children to drink. But they must calculate carefully, or their babies will die, poisoned by salt. A hurricane, such as Matthew, wreaks havoc on the supply that's already a trickle.

In this issue Cliff Reed writes about the time when people of African descent were property – bought and sold and worked and whipped and killed without a thought for their humanity. Haitians still suffer from that legacy. For although they won their independence as the first country run by free Afro-Caribbean people, they were saddled with an onerous 100-year debt – one which was not paid off until 1947. They were forced to buy their own freedom.

The repercussions continue today. In the mid-1800s, Haiti was the number-one sugar cane producer in the world. But once it became free the world's rich nations refused to trade with Haiti, impoverishing the nation.

Situated in hurricane alley, Haiti is again ravaged by the excesses of wealthy nations as the changing climate brings fiercer and more frequent storms.

We must do what we can to help.

For information on the Unitarian General Assembly Executive Committee Haiti Appeal, see page 12.

— MC Burns

## Faith in Words

The annual Christmas issue of worship material, stories and meditations is coming up. Please send in prayers, addresses, meditations, art work, photographs – anything which is an expression of your faith – to *The Inquirer*. We are happy to receive contributions about Christmas, Winter, Solstice – whatever the season means to you.

New contributors are most welcome.

For more information or to submit material, email:

**[Inquirer@btinternet.com](mailto:Inquirer@btinternet.com)** Or, use the editor's postal address at left.

**Material is due by 15 November**

## With thanks

The colour cover on this issue of *The Inquirer* was sponsored by the Leonard Chamberlain Trust in honour of its tercentenary. See page 11 for more information about the Trust.



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# Executive Committee Key Messages

# GA's 'Next Steps' are coming along

## 1. Training and Education Development Project

'Ministry in all its forms' is a key element of 'From Vision to Action: Next Steps' with the aim to ensure the provision of the best possible ministry for congregations.

The Executive Committee of the General Assembly (EC) has agreed that we must move with some urgency to develop a modular framework for training, education and professional development that will be accessible by a larger number and variety of people; some of whom may then seek entry into professional Ministry. The need for action now has been emphasised.

This proposal has the full support of the Unitarian College Manchester (UCM) and follows the UCM Residential held in June which drew together many of those active in education and training across the Unitarian Movement. Other key stakeholders, including Harris Manchester College, Oxford as well as those providing lay training and other interested parties will be engaged in the project.

In order to take the project forward, Rachel Skelton will be seconded from UCM to work for the General Assembly for a year from 1 October 2016 as project manager. The plan will be to present a new model to the GA Annual Meetings in April 2017 and then work on implementation. An Advisory Group will be established to steer the project and Rachel will report to the Chief Officer.

## 2. Nightingale Centre

The Executive Committee was pleased to meet at the Nightingale Unitarian Conference Centre in Great Hucklow, Derbyshire in light of their responsibilities as Trustees of the Centre, as well as of the General Assembly. Members of the Centre Management Committee joined the EC.

They were given a guided tour of the building during which Centre Manager, Stella Burney, described the new improvements and plans for the future.

Proposals for the Barleycrofts Cottages, properties owned by the Nightingale Centre, were also outlined. The Management Committee, Centre Manager and all staff were thanked for their contribution to making the Centre such a success. The ways in which the Centre demonstrated Unitarian values in action were highlighted and it was agreed that they could and should be promoted further.

## 3. Campus Ministry – Cambridge

One of the 'From Vision to Action: Next Steps' was to pilot some form of campus ministry initiative. The Executive Committee agreed to support Cambridge Unitarian Church's initiative to establish a University Society in Cambridge University and to match their funding. This will enable the project to continue for one year.

A grant of £10,000 has been awarded.

In agreeing the grant it has been emphasised that it would be a pilot project from which there can be

learning for others in the Denomination interested in promoting some form of campus ministry. A report will be produced on the outcomes in the key areas of work which could include a manual for others.

## 4. General Assembly Budget 2016-2017

The Budget for the year commencing 1 October 2016 was agreed. The congregational quota will remain at £35 per member.

The Essex Hall Trust and the British and Foreign Unitarian Association were thanked for their contributions to support the work of the General Assembly. There is a particular need in the year ahead to manage expenditure carefully. We face a number of pressures, but already considerable work has been undertaken by David Joseph, the new Finance Manager, to improve the validity of the underlying assumptions, for which he was thanked.

## 5. Annual Meetings

The Annual Meetings Panel presented a discussion paper to EC on arrangements for future meetings from 2019 onwards. The increasing cost of the Meetings has been accompanied by growing expectations regarding quality.

In thinking about the future it was essential to ensure that all the objectives for the Meetings can be met; doing the formal business required as a charity, providing a programme that will inspire attendees, providing education and training as well as facilitating social interaction and networking.

One proposal would reduce the length of the overall Meetings. It was recognised that the direction, structure and content of the Meetings needed to be widely discussed before any proposals for change were presented for approval. The EC will be guided by the Annual Meetings Panel on how this is taken forward. Andrew Mason was thanked for his work on the discussion paper.

## 6. Help is at Hand

A report was received from Louise Rogers on updating 'Help is at Hand', the General Assembly's resource for congregational officers. This resource will henceforth be available on the GA website, enabling future updating to be done more easily.

This forms one of the 'Vision into Action: Next Steps' as part of the 'How we organise ourselves' section.

## 7. What is a Unitarian? Video

The Executive Committee was pleased to hear that the 'What is a Unitarian?' video has been viewed 1795 times in the three months since it was placed on YouTube.

It is an excellent short introduction to Unitarianism and congregations are encouraged to link to it on their own websites. It is available to view from the homepage of the GA website or on YouTube at:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Pwx\\_xeyVjc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Pwx_xeyVjc) or  
<http://bit.ly/2dGaumu>

# Hibbert's Unitarian missionary

(Continued from page 3)

times, Robert was sent back to England, from 1784-87, for his education – with Gilbert Wakefield – at Emmanuel College, Cambridge. On his return to Jamaica he joined the family's 'mercantile house' and became a magistrate. In 1792 he married Elizabeth Jane Nembhard, but their marriage was to be childless. In 1791 he had bought two sugar estates, Georgia and Dundee, in Hanover parish, to add to the family's already considerable holdings in Jamaica. All were worked by slave labour. In 1803, Hibbert came back to England, settling permanently in Bedfordshire but retaining ownership of his profitable sugar estates in Jamaica.

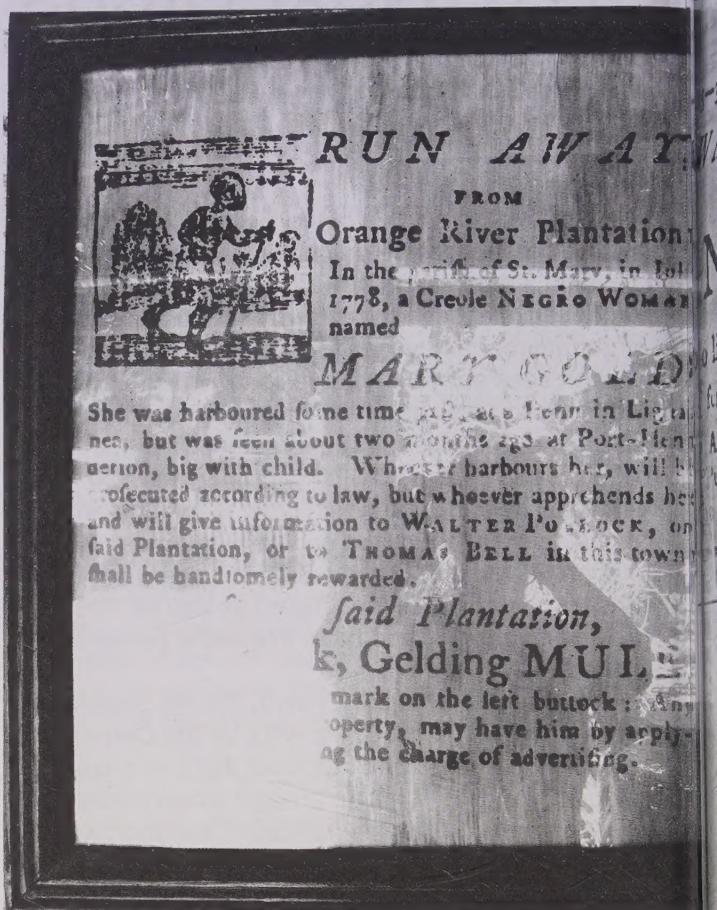
## Unitarians in Hibbert's social circle

In England, as a student, Robert Hibbert had met Unitarians, most notably Gilbert Wakefield and William Frend. As a result of their conversations, Hibbert adopted Unitarian beliefs. The Dissenting tradition was not altogether alien to the Hibbert family, though. A great-uncle, George Hibbert, besides being an outspoken supporter of slavery, was also a trustee of Cross Street Chapel, Manchester. Frend, however, was a dedicated Abolitionist and he tried to persuade Robert Hibbert to become one too. In this, arguably more important, matter, Frend was unable to win Hibbert over. It has been suggested, however, that Hibbert's attitude to his slaves was influenced by his Abolitionist friends.

Two pieces of evidence are advanced for this. One is that he reduced by a quarter the amount of sugar his slaves were required to produce, although how this was to be overseen from a distance of several thousand miles is problematical. The other is that he sent a Unitarian minister to give 'religious instruction' to the slaves on his Georgia estate and so 'improve their condition'. The man who got this bizarre job was the Rev Thomas Cooper, a young man from Framlingham in Suffolk. If Hibbert thought he would gain some 'brownie points' from the Abolitionists for this appointment, he was to be greatly disappointed.

## Unitarian Ministry among slaves

Thomas Cooper and his wife, Ann, arrived on the Georgia estate, near Lucea, on Christmas Day 1817. They stayed for three years, doing what they could for the people entrusted to their care but were utterly appalled by the institution of slavery, with its cruelty, its brutality, and its dehumanisation



of the human beings who were held in subjection by it. They also observed its morally degrading influence on those who oversaw and owned the slaves. On their return home, Cooper wrote a devastating account of what he and Ann had witnessed. Cooper's 'Condition of the Negro Slaves in Jamaica' (1823, 1824), and the evidence he gave to Parliament, helped to hasten the final and total abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1834.

Although the transatlantic slave trade had been outlawed in 1807, slavery itself had not been. The slave-owners liked to pretend that the slaves were well treated and content. Cooper's first-hand evidence helped put the lie to that pretence. Unlike many Abolitionists, the Coopers actually saw slavery at first hand and were able to give a fresh impetus to the cause. Their efforts earned them the undying hatred of the pro-slavery lobby in general and the Hibbert family in particular – who did their utmost to discredit the Coopers.

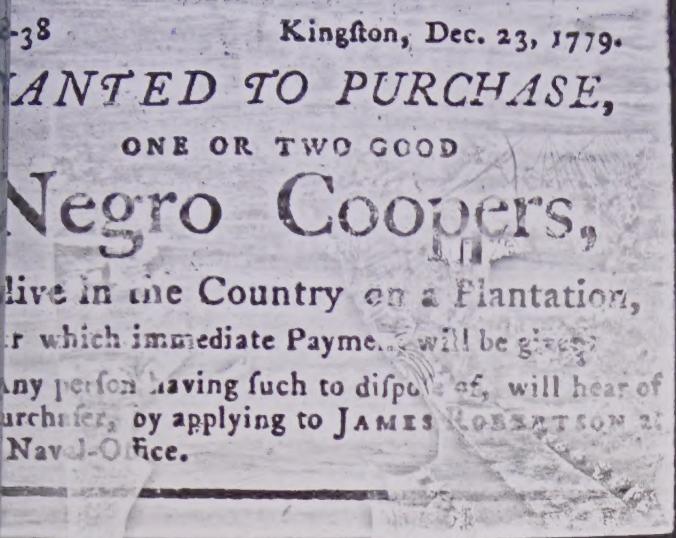
## Seeking compensation for his 'property'

As Abolition approached, we find Robert Hibbert complaining about the amount of compensation the slave-owners were to receive for losing their 'property'. In 1833 he petitioned the House of Commons as "proprietor" of 560 slaves 'worth' £70,000, whingeing that the promised level of compensation monies would be 'utterly ruinous to himself and to others who are similarly situated.' He is said to have sold his estate at great loss. That wasn't the end of it, though. To us it seems incredible that, when slavery was abolished, it was the slave-owners, not the slaves, who were compensated. Between 1835 and 1837, Robert Hibbert claimed and was awarded a total of £21,096 in compensation for the 'loss' of 1070 slaves



Hibbert House is now a museum. Photo by Cliff Reed

# slaves helped end their plight



Posters seeking slaves. The one on the left wants Marygold – a pregnant runaway, ‘big with child’, who escaped. She is advertised on the same poster as a lost gelding mule. The poster offers a ‘handsome reward’ for Marygold’s return. Above, another poster, seeking ‘negro coopers’ for which, ‘immediate payment’ will be given. The posters now hang in Greenwood Great House, now a museum, ugly reminders of when slaves were considered ‘property’. Photos by Paulette Reed

on five different estates spread across Jamaica (not just the 324 on Georgia), and even one solitary slave in St Mary. Ten years later Hibbert set up his Trust for the propagation of ‘Christianity in its most simple and intelligible form.’ It is hard not to suppose that his ‘compensation’ payment of what was then a very considerable amount of money did not form some part of the endowment. To say that all this is rather ironic is a distinct understatement.

## Cooper made a real difference

When I was in Jamaica in August, one young Jamaican asked me what Thomas Cooper had done for black people. I was able to give him a very positive answer. Had he asked me (which, fortunately, he didn’t) what Robert Hibbert (or his Trust) had done for black people, I would have struggled to find an answer – other than Hibbert’s sending of Thomas Cooper to Jamaica, with its unintended results. Maybe there are those who *can* give an answer.

What are we 21st-century Unitarians to make of Thomas Cooper and Robert Hibbert, our predecessors by 200 years?

It isn’t always fair to judge the people of the past by the standards of the present. But those modern standards with respect to what we now call human rights were already in formation when these men lived. And slavery was not only on the wrong side of them, it was known to be on the wrong side of them.

In Thomas Cooper we find a kindred spirit – a ‘soul rebel’, to use Bob Marley’s words. His fury at the sheer evil of the slave system still burns through his 19th-century words. Cooper is one of the unsung heroes of the Abolitionist struggle, and there is every reason to think that Ann Cooper not only shared her

husband’s experiences and convictions, she also took her share of the vitriol poured upon him by the slave-owners, including the Hibberts.

And what of Robert Hibbert? Was he just a good man with an insufficiently awakened conscience, trapped in an evil system, which he tried to ameliorate as best he could? Even Cooper calls him, ‘a man of great benevolence’, though with what degree of irony we will never know. Perhaps one test, other than his refusal to become an Abolitionist, would have been the amount of compensation Hibbert paid to his 1070 slaves for their years of cruel and unjust subjection when Abolition finally came. Hibbert was personally generous, we are told, and he wanted his philanthropy to be continued by his Trust – but what, if anything, he did for his former human ‘property’ in Jamaica I would be interested to learn.

One of Jamaica’s leading reggae artists is Frederick ‘Toots’ Hibbert. He probably owes his surname to the slave-owning Hibberts of the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> centuries. One of his songs contains a line that those slave-owners should have heard:

‘...pressure drop on you,  
I say when it drops  
Oh you gonna feel it  
Know that you were doing wrong.’

The Rev Cliff Reed is a retired Unitarian minister.

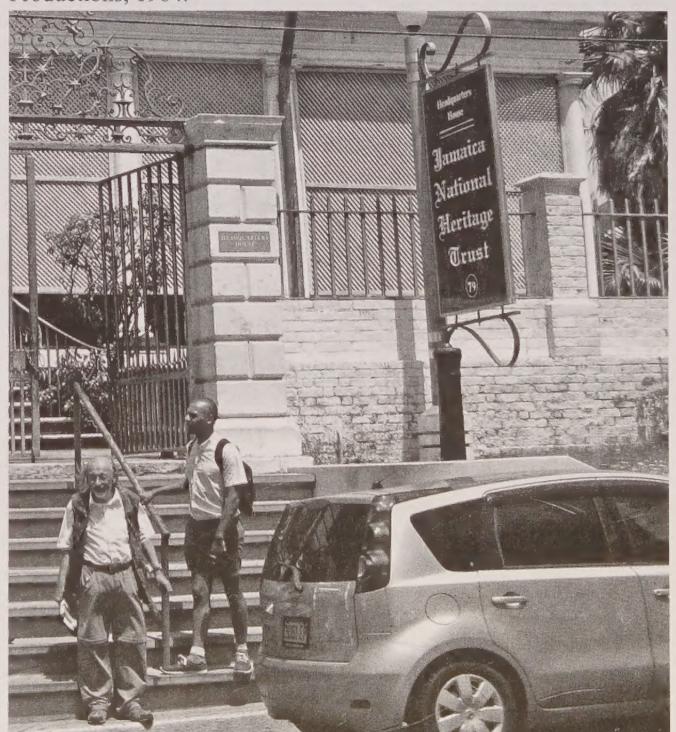
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Paul ZACH, ed. ‘Jamaica’, [Insight Guides], 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. APA Productions, 1984.



Cliff Reed (left) and his son, Stephen, stand before the gates of Robert Hibbert’s house, now a Jamaican heritage site.

# *Chosing sides on a Russian holiday*

I have long wanted to visit Russia. It has been a sort of ‘bucket list’ item, but which Russia? There seem to be two. There is the political Russia, traditionally referred to as ‘the Bear’, to imply that it is big, brutal and clumsy. Some Russians apparently resent this description, and attempts have been made to change this image into a sort of cuddly bear cub.

But ‘the Bear’ has been in the background all my life; the Stalinist regime behind the Iron Curtain, the spies, Burgess, McLean and the rest, John Le Carré novels, the Berlin Wall and the Cuba crisis. During the era of ‘glasnost’ and ‘perestroika’, Manchester District Unitarians sent a letter of support to President Gorbachev, to encourage him in his liberalising moves. No reply came, but we felt glad we had done it. More recently, ‘the Bear’ has reappeared in the form of President Putin, a very different animal from ‘Gorby’. So, would I want a holiday in present-day Moscow?

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Then there is the cultural Russia, land of Tolstoy novels, devoured by millions, in print, film and TV versions. Add the Dostoyevsky novels, Chekov plays, Tchaikovsky’s sumptuous symphonies and ballet music and much more. To St Petersburg then, the cultural rather than the political capital of Russia? Or should it be both? Glossy brochures offer two-centre holidays, linked by a river cruise. Then we watched a TV documentary. It told of the performance of Shostakovich’s 7<sup>th</sup> Symphony, played by a starving orchestra in a freezing concert hall during the appalling WW2 siege of the city under its communist name of Leningrad. With all supplies cut off, Leningraders were eventually reduced to eating rats, horses, cats and dogs, with rumours of cannibalism. Hunger tormented them, the Luftwaffe attacked from the air; bodies lay unburied in the streets. Loudspeakers were set up all over the city to relay the performance of the symphony, not only to the population, but also to the German troops, who had by then reached the outer suburbs. One survivor remembered being in the audience: ‘I wanted to cry but at the same time there was a sense of pride. “Damn you, we have an orchestra! We’re at the Philharmonic Hall so you Germans stay where you are!”’ We were surrounded by Germans shelling us. But there was this feeling of superiority. A girl came up from the audience with a bunch of flowers. She gave them to the conductor. Can you imagine fresh garden flowers during the blockade? It was unbearably joyful.’

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The idea of walking the streets where this happened spurred us to travel there, a combination of the cultural and the political after all. Linda, our tour guide, was an art historian, fully knowledgeable about the enormous Hermitage Museum, which is part of the State Museum,



## Funny Old World

By John Midgley

along with the Winter Palace and several others. It contains over three million items and includes the largest collection of paintings in the world. Far too much for a short visit, but thrilling, nonetheless, to stand and stare at enormous, opulent rooms and long galleries with hundreds of exhibits, fabulous ceilings and chandeliers, paintings by Rembrandt, Rubens, Gainsborough, Reynolds and much more.

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Outside the city, Catherine Palace houses the fabulous Amber Room. Created in the 18th century, with walls that covered more than 590 sq ft and contained over 13,000 lbs of amber, it was looted during World War II by the German army. The amber’s whereabouts remain a mystery, but it was all photographed or sketched in detail beforehand, and in 2003, after decades of work by Russian craftsmen and donations from Germany, the reconstructed Amber Room was opened. Art triumphed over politics.

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Wanting a sense of the religious life of this handsome, litter-free city, we visited churches and asked discreet questions. Linda told us that during the communist era, in a country village, her grandmother had brought in a priest, ‘So that I could be secretly baptised as an infant.’ Our driver added his similar experience. ‘There was much suppression. If you were suspect, you would never get promotion at work.’ We viewed the fabulous Church of the Saviour on Spilled Blood with its colourful ‘onion’ domes, built on the site where Emperor Alexander II was assassinated in 1881. All churches were suppressed during the communist era. The Protestant church of St Peter and St Paul was commandeered as a vegetable storehouse, then converted into a swimming bath. A photograph display showed children at their gala, cheering on schoolmates swimming towards what had been the chancel. It is now restored as a busy place of worship.

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In the Cathedral of St Isaac, we heard a choir singing, with a beautiful, booming bass voice, and noticed Linda cross herself as she passed one of the many icons. Officially this is a museum and during the Soviet era it became ‘a museum of atheism’. Would present-day atheists still be interested in a pilgrimage there? Outside, an elderly beggar-woman held out a cup.

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# Reality and freedom of consciousness

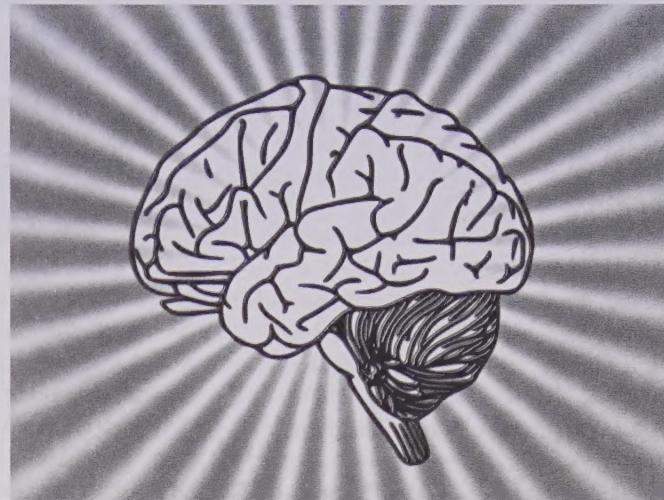
By Christine Avery

We live in an age of scientific materialism. The pure scientific dogma is that everything that happens in the world has a physical cause. Therefore everything you think, feel and do is caused by brain cells acting according to physical laws, determined by physical forces. Essentially there is no room for mind, or for freewill, and hence all religions are some kind of nonsense. Is this so? I suggest that the highly problematical nature of the materialist or physicalist point of view, this modern orthodoxy, ought to be carefully interrogated by the religious mind.

Even the scientific mind actually quails before it. The well-known (and ever readable) Steven Pinker says: 'Free will is a fictional construction, but it has application to the real world'. This, of course, is blatantly inconsistent and he does not explain how such a thing can be. Likewise Michael Brooks in his book *13 Things That Don't Make Sense, The Most Intriguing Scientific Mysteries of our Time*, backs off nervously from the implications of the 'no mind, no freewill' idea. He says, 'Freewill may be the one scientific anomaly that humans would be wise to ignore.'

## No link between objective and subjective

The brain is the most complex object in the known universe. But nobody has established a comprehensible link between its processes and the world of consciousness, of the 'qualia' – the redness of red, the bitterness of grief, the subtlety of good thinking. The philosopher David Chalmers takes the position that such a project can never succeed. 'There will never be a reductionist, mechanistic account of how the objective world is linked with the subjective one.' This expression of Chalmers' carefully argued position is taken seriously by Christof Koch, a scientist whose career has been devoted to trying to do exactly what Chalmers declares to be impossible: that is, to



*There is more to our consciousness than the electrical impulses of the brain. Illustration by Pixabay*

reduce consciousness to physical process.

A major problem for the physicalist is that all physicalist explanations are self-undermining. If it is true that (so far unknown) physical laws absolutely determine all thoughts, then that view itself is also physically determined. It makes no real sense because for the hard-line materialist there is no such thing as sense. You might just as well be listening forever to the chirping of sparrows: in this view there is no purpose, no light of consciousness, no actual meaning. Similarly on the action front, if everything you do can be explained away by forces beyond your control, why bother? Why not just drift along, or respond to every impulse, however base or chaotic, because that is all you are: a chunk of matter automatically controlled from elsewhere? You could arrive at this point by reasoning and then abandon reason by pointing at your physical brain.

I would simply and clearly take the non-materialist view, and affirm consciousness as the most real and immediate thing that we know. The fact of consciousness is not inferred, or derived from theory or calculation. We are indubitably conscious of being conscious. The content of consciousness may be erroneous, even delusional, but the experience of consciousness cannot be denied. This is not the Cartesian point that mind and matter are different 'substances'. Instead we surely have to say that matter is substance while mind is something radically different, not a 'substance' at all.

## Art is more than an electrical event

To make this idea clearer I would like to suggest the following for consideration: suppose someone reads you a good poem or plays you a delightful tune. Then a scientist shows you a moving image of what has happened in your brain when this has been going on. You will surely prefer the conscious experience to the pattern of chemical and electrical events. *And you would perceive that the two things are radically different.* Experience can never be reduced to something else, and it contains qualities of moral and aesthetic judgement which don't occur at the physical level.

Physicalism has a dire effect on the social consensus about what is real. People who are told that their illnesses are 'all in the mind' usually become incensed because they have a dismissive opinion of mind.

*The Rev John Midgley is a retired Unitarian Minister.*

*(Continued on next page)*

# Letters to the Editor

## Essex Hall caretaker is thankful for support

Dear Unitarians:

As many of you know, I have been battling throat cancer since being diagnosed last year. But I have now been given the all-clear. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking all the people who sent messages of hope and encouragement and especially Essex Hall Management for their wonderful support.

Your thoughts and prayers meant so much to my family and I.

**Isabella Clarke**

Essex Hall

## SACH: What's in a name?

To the Editor:

Joan Hughes from Shrewsbury

(*Inquirer* letters, 8 Oct), whom I met (No collusion, honest!) when coincidentally I recently visited as preacher for the first time, makes an interesting, diverting point about a possible change of the 'Send a Child to Hucklow' charity's name!

I've never heard anyone so far make the negative association she does, though there has been the joke about whether, having sent the children to Hucklow, should we send them back again! A 'Rose by any other Name'? The 'Send a Child to Hucklow Fund' (Debate still rages fiercely over whether we include the original hyphens or not!) was an appeal to potential *donors* when it was first set up in the 1960s – not to the participants. I don't really think folk ever thought in terms of 'banishment' of the children in any way!

We do seek at all times to 'Treat' the

children properly in every way, from the attitude of leaders and Nightingale Unitarian Conference Centre staff as reliable, caring adults, to avoid any hints of the children being seen as 'second-class citizens'. Some of the children are young carers; some have witnessed what they should never have; some live in circumstance and under such pressure of which we should all, as a society, be thoroughly ashamed. What is all our much-vaunted 'business enterprise' supposed to be *for* in the end?

So if it's 'SACH' or 'TACH', whatever. As someone famously once put it, 'Give us your \*\*\*\*\* money!'

**The Rev Ernest Baker**

(Proud to be) Hon Sec, Send a Child to Hucklow Fund. For more information, or to contribute, see: [www.sendachildtohucklow.org.uk](http://www.sendachildtohucklow.org.uk)

# What's 'in the mind' is just as real

(Continued from previous page)

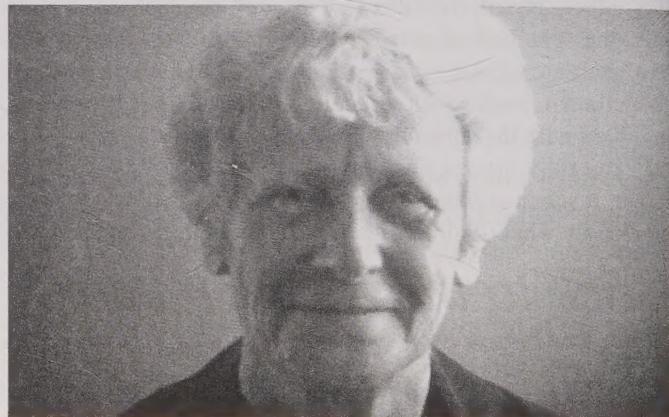
If things are 'physical' people tend to feel that they are more 'real'. And there is an obvious plausibility in this. We are anchored by the basic reality of our bodies, and the hardness of tables, the softness of beds; all such things make us feel that life is manageably simple and uncontroversial. They blessedly save us from hitting the buffers of disagreement about everything. And, as Raymond Tallis dryly observes: 'having your head cut off notably reduces your IQ score.'

## Meaning comes from consciousness

Who can doubt that matter is very complicated and wonderful? But a physical event can't *understand* another physical event. We understand and find meaning because we have consciousness. And it is conscious beings, with purposes and understanding, who actually produce theories, cathedrals, space ships, poems, etc. In this way, mind massively influences the material or physical world. Explaining such facts in a materialistic way is not an option. The radical distinction between mind and matter is surely obvious. Nobody understands the 'how' – but there may emerge a better way than the present one of affirming mind and honouring its valid place in our lives, philosophies and cosmologies.

It is absolutely fine for scientists and materialistic dogmatists to go on trying to reduce mind to matter. As Koch says, this enterprise is about honestly seeking 'a single, rational, and intellectually consistent view of the universe and everything in it'. But this worthy (and fruitful) approach gets beyond itself in claiming imperial rule over all the territory. Perhaps it is not ultimately consistent with the nature of the universe. There are other ways of relating to reality, ways with equal integrity to the scientific one but *not* centred on measuring and counting: *not* (pace Galileo) finding their goal in pure mathematics.

Francis Crick, obviously a dedicated scientist and physicalist, eventually suggested in his 1994 book, *The Astonishing*



Christine Avery

*Hypothesis*, that 'some view closer to the religious one might [yet] become plausible.' To quote from Koch in conclusion: 'That galaxies, cars, billiard balls, and subatomic particles act in a regular manner that can be captured by mathematics, is nothing short of amazing. Indeed some physicists – most famously Albert Einstein – believe in... a creator precisely because of this "miraculous" state of affairs.' He also quotes in conclusion words from the Dead Sea Scrolls: 'So walk I on uplands unbounded, and I know that there is hope for that which thou didst mould out of dust to have consort with things eternal.'

And Iris Murdoch, unequivocally an atheist, ends her book *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* with a quotation from Psalm 139:

'Whither shall I go from thy spirit, whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend into heaven thou art there, if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.'

Christine Avery is a member of Plymouth Unitarians.

# Tercentenary of The Leonard Chamberlain Trust



By Michael Tracey

The Trust was founded by the Will of Leonard Chamberlain in 1716 and the 300 year history of the charity has recently been celebrated. The charity has had a continuous connection with what is now the Hull Unitarian Church in that the four trustees of the Trust have to be members of the church.

Leonard Chamberlain was a Presbyterian and member of the famous Bowl Alley Lane Chapel, Hull. In his Will he appointed four members of that Chapel to administer the Trust to be established. The theological views held by the congregation evolved over time and embraced Unitarianism in the early years of the 19th century. In 1881 the congregation moved to a new church in the then very fashionable Park Street and became known as Park Street (Unitarian) Church. That brick gothic building was demolished in 1976 and when the present church was opened the following year the name Hull Unitarian Church was adopted.

The current governing instrument for the Trust is a Charity Commission Scheme of 2001 in which the following objects are stated:-

(1) *the provision of housing accommodation for poor persons of good character resident in the area of benefit (the East Riding of Yorkshire particularly the City of Kingston upon Hull and the town of Selby in North Yorkshire);*

(2) *to advance the Unitarian and Christian religions in such ways as the trustees think fit (including training of Ministers for the Unitarian and Free Christian Churches) but in particular to assist the Hull Unitarian Church and other non conformist churches in the area of benefit;*

(3) *promoting the education of persons under the age of 25 who are in need of financial assistance in the area of benefit; and*

(4) *the relief of persons resident in the area of benefit who are in need, hardship or distress.*

The Trust provides 27 Almshouses. All of the accommodation, mostly two-bedroomed bungalows, is of a high standard with a weekly maintenance charge within the housing benefit allowance. Furthermore, if a resident on a working age benefit has been financially disadvantaged by what is commonly termed the 'bedroom tax' then the Trust makes good any housing benefit shortfall.

The charity has a particular responsibility to assist the Hull Unitarian Church. The other old Presbyterian chapels in the area of benefit which evolved to become Congregational and

then United Reformed Churches have also been supported by the Trust. The Trustees do have discretion to support to a lesser degree Unitarianism outside of the area of benefit. Educational grants are offered to all schools and colleges within the area of benefit providing 'A' level courses, to award at their discretion, to the most financially disadvantaged students going on to higher education.

The organisations that the Trust supports with regards to the relief of need, hardship or distress include the local Emmaus homelessness charity, a Women's Support Centre dealing with issues of domestic abuse, the Hull Council for the Disabled and a local project supporting refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers.

Leonard Chamberlain is buried in the chancel of the 12th century Rowley Church which is delightfully situated in the East Yorkshire countryside. The church is in the grounds of a country house hotel which was once the rectory.



To celebrate the tercentenary of the charity the Almshouse residents joined with members of the Hull Unitarian Church to enjoy afternoon tea at the Rowley Manor Hotel. It was a pleasant social occasion with an opportunity to explore the church and discover the stone inscribed to the memory of Leonard Chamberlain and his wife Catherine.

W. Whitaker in his book on the history of Bowl Alley Lane Chapel written in 1910 and titled, 'One Line of the Puritan Tradition in Hull', writes a fitting eulogy to Leonard Chamberlain.

'The earnest care of this woollen draper for education, his devotion to learning, the courage with which he had taken the side of freedom when that seemed the side of certain defeat and ruin, his mindfulness of the cry of the poor, his sympathy with the pioneer movements of his time for social reform, his anxiety to foster and perpetuate homes of pure free worship - all this helps us to understand the inner nature of Puritanism and what it accomplished for the English people.'

# Samhain – so much more than Halloween

By Tony McNeile

Samhain (pronounced ‘sowain’) falls on 31 October – also Halloween. The modern commercial world has taken over an ancient tradition and turned it into party time, when we can dress up as ghosts, skeletons and witches and frighten people with ‘Trick or Treat’!

It was never like this. Before modern times country dwellers celebrated this festival – which falls between the autumn equinox and the shortest day – much differently. It marks the beginning of winter. It was also the time of the third harvest when nuts and berries were gathered. And it was a time of decision. The family must prepare for winter. How much grain was needed for their survival, how much must be kept for the spring sowing, how much for making bread? What animals must be spared, which slaughtered for the larder, which could be sold.

It was treated as a new year. Hearths were cleaned and fires relit in a ceremony that reminded them that their strength was their community.

And like all New Years’, it was also a time to look back as well as forward. So they remembered the year gone by, particularly those family members who had not survived it. The older generation was respected. Family was important. This was a time of remembrance. And they remembered by holding a family feast. Tables were set with places for those who had departed. They ate and drank and talked about the ones who should sit in the empty chairs.

And I suppose remembering on those dark autumn nights, and talking as the fire sank on its embers, it could become a little spine chilling. You became more aware of the darkness, aware of the mystery of death and wondering what lay beyond. You gathered closer round the fire and spoke more softly as if others might hear. How easy for superstitions to arise as you

looked at the empty chair and felt the presence of that missing relative.

And somehow the beauty of remembering became lost and tradition changed to thinking that the souls of the departed might be stranded in some no man’s land between earth and heaven and only prayer could release them and guide them upwards.

In our Bolton Unitarian Earth Spirit group, we return to remembering and honouring those who have gone before. We bring photographs and mementos of past family members, especially the ones who have influenced our lives. To talk about them is not just remembering. It re-establishes our connections to our ancestors. Some have given us of their wisdom, inspired us by their courage, passed on talents. From the generations before us we have inherited special features and characteristics. We know we are part of a continuum. Our generation has grown out of the past. If we have children, we have passed on the baton of the earlier genes to the next.

And sometimes as we talk, we remember more about our ancestors and sometimes we understand them better as people who struggled with life – as we might have done. They were characters with strengths and weaknesses just like us. They are no longer just names.

As a group, we have shared our stories. They are all different which makes us all different but in telling them we become closer. The wheel of the year turns and we will move on. Ghosts and skeletons shouting ‘Trick or Treat’ are not of our world.

*The Rev Tony McNeile is a retired Unitarian minister. For more information on Unitarian Earth Spirit, see the website: <http://unitarianearthspirit.org.uk>*

## GA Executive: Haiti needs our support

The Executive Committee of the General Assembly has issued the following Appeal to Unitarians throughout the UK.

‘The humanitarian disaster caused in Haiti by Hurricane Matthew has caused massive devastation to the people of Haiti at a time when they are still struggling to recover from the damage caused by a previous hurricane a few years ago. We urge everybody to do what they can to help these people in their time of need by contributing to the Clara Barton Fund of the British Red Cross.

‘We are very much aware that many of you are already contributing to this fund to help the people of Syria and it will be a challenge to do more than you are already doing. We are already in touch with the Red Cross and will be providing updates as they are made available to us.’

Donations can be made online at the following <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/Unitarian>

Or send cheques to: Laura Deacon, British Red Cross, 44 Moorfields, London, EC2Y 9AL

Cheques should be made payable to British Red Cross with ‘Unitarian Churches Clara Barton Appeal for Haiti’ clearly marked on the back.



*From the British Red Cross in Les Cayes: ‘There have been hundreds of deaths, injuries and a lot of people are missing. Thousands are without shelter and waiting for help. More than 60,000 people are in temporary shelters and 2,000 children have been separated from their parents.’*